

Empowering employers to support domestic violence survivors at work

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This Domestic Violence Awareness Month, we're lifting up the work of the Women's Bureau's Fostering Access, Rights and Equity (FARE) grantees, which assist women impacted by gender-based violence and harassment in the world of work. Earlier this month we interviewed Meghan Scanlon, Executive Director of 2023 FARE grantee Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence (CCADV), which is working to expand domestic violence trainings, engage with businesses and ultimately change the culture of workplaces to better support survivors of domestic violence.

WB: Can you tell us about the activities CCADV is focused on under the FARE grant?

MS: I'll begin with some background. In 2022, the Connecticut legislature passed a law that requires basic domestic violence training for all Connecticut state employees. This was a really big accomplishment! We're now using the FARE grant to expand these trainings on rights and resources beyond state employees to the general public. We're identifying new partners, like businesses, that can work with us to increase knowledge about gender-based violence and harassment at work and the resources that exist to support workers.



CCADV and WB Northeast Region staff, along with partners, participate in a roundtable on gender-based violence and harassment in Hartford, Conn. July 2024.

WB: You mentioned partnering with businesses. Can you talk more about your work engaging employer organizations?

MS: Yes! We are actively partnering with employer organizations because it allows us to reach both employers and workers. Some of our partners include the Connecticut Restaurant Association, Connecticut Business and Industry Association, Connecticut Council of Municipalities and Connecticut Water.

We're giving employers the tools to better support their employees, for example by helping employers to be prepared when their employee says they are experiencing domestic violence. While many survivors aren't ready to disclose, we want employers to ensure all their workers know that resources exist and to provide information in a place that's easy to access, like a break room or bathroom.

We've learned through this work that it's important to understand what information workers and employers already have about addressing gender-based violence and harassment. Based on advice from a fellow FARE grantee, Restaurant Opportunities Centers United, we developed a survey to gather this baseline information from workplaces. With that data, we are able to create trainings that more effectively meet the needs of that specific workplace. We also always emphasize that we are partners in this work – you don't have to do it alone.

WB: Can you share any success stories?

MS: Recently one of our survivor leaders held a training on domestic violence at their workplace, during which a co-worker disclosed that they were also a survivor. The leader was able to connect their co-worker with resources. Now they feel empowered because they were able to help someone, and the co-worker may be able to help others in the future.

Shifting workplace culture to make sure all workers feel safe and supported may take time, but we are seeing progress through our interventions. Last year we did our first round of domestic violence trainings for state employees. We are now on our second year of the trainings, and we've had more people reach out than ever to ask questions and receive resources.

WB: Separate from your FARE grant work, CCADV has been a steadfast advocate for paid safe leave for survivors. Why is this a priority?

MS: Paid safe leave is both a values issue and an economic justice issue for survivors. It's common for survivors of violence to need time away from work to relocate, go to court or make other changes, and this can happen without a lot of advance notice. Paid safe leave is a critical support for survivors and their families. Without access to paid safe leave, the survivor could face devastating impacts to their ability to keep a job and maintain steady income.

because of the violence they are experiencing. Securing paid safe leave protections for survivors is integral to their ability to heal and thrive.

WB: What are three steps someone can take if they want to learn more about the impact of domestic violence on the workplace?

MS: First, download CCADV's Workplace Toolkit and share it with your employer, your manager, your staff or your union. Second, if you're in Connecticut, reach out to CCADV to conduct a training. And finally, educate yourself on existing resources and the basic signs of domestic violence. You can go to CT Safe Connect, which is a free and confidential resource center with a 24/7 hotline.

For additional domestic violence information and assistance, reach out to the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1.800.799.SAFE (7233) or text "START" to 88788.

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